

1988

General Secretary's Report to the Workers' Party Ard Fheis, Annual Delegate Conference 1988

Workers' Party of Ireland

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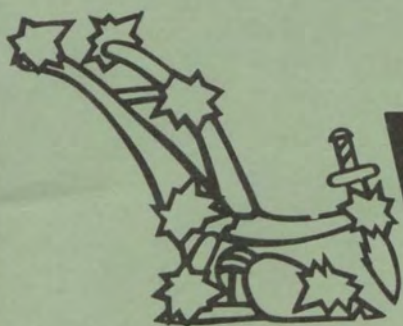
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THE WORKERS PARTY

PEACE WORK DEMOCRACY
CLASS POLITICS

General Secretary's Report

Árd Fheis/Annual
Delegate Conference
1988

General Secretary's Report

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Members of Ard Comhairle/CEC and members of EPC, EMC and Chairpersons of Specialist Committees

The Ard Comhairle/CEC met on four occasions, three of which were of two days duration.

The following officers were elected by the CEC, Tomás Mac Giolla having been elected Party President at the Ard Fheis.

Party Officers

Sean Garland, General Secretary; Peter Kane, Administrative Secretary; Tony Heffernan, PRO; Padraig Mannion, Treasurer; Gerry Doherty, Finance Officer.

Committee Chairpersons & Secretaries

Ard Comhairle/CEC: Chair Tomás MacGiolla; Secretary Peter Kane. Executive Political Committee: Chair Proinsias De Rossa; Secretary Sean Garland.

Executive Management Committee: Chair Tony Heffernan; Secretary Sean Garland.

Specialist Committees

International Affairs: Sean O Cionnaith

Finance: Oliver Rogers

Women: Angela Cassidy

Electoral & Recruitment: Peter Kane

Youth: Fearghal Ross

Justice & Civil Liberties: Triona Dooney

Economic Affairs: Eamonn Smullen

Health & Social Services: John McManus

Publications: Tony Heffernan

Arts & Culture: Paddy Gillan

Northern Ireland: Seamus Lynch

The EMC and EPC are elected at the initial meeting of the CEC. The Party President and General Secretary are automatically members of both committees.

EPC: Jimmy Brick, Proinsias De Rossa, Triona Dooney, Paddy Gallagher, Des Geraghty, Cathal Goulding, Seamus Harrison, Tony Heffernan, Peter Kane, Seamus Lynch, Mary McMahon, Des O'Hagan, Pat Rabbitte, Eamon Smullen.

EMC: Proinsias De Rossa, Des Geraghty, Seamus Harrison, Tony Heffernan, Peter Kane, Seamus Lynch, Des O'Hagan, Eamonn Smullen.

The Ard Comhairle (CEC) is as follows: The year denotes year elected. Number — the number of attendances and Es the number of times excused. Blank means full attendance.

Tomás Mac Giolla	Tony Heffernan '86
Jimmy Brick '86 2	Peter Kane '86
Angela Cassidy — Co-opted	John Lowry '87
Rosheen Callender '87	Seamus Lynch '87 3
Proinsias De Rossa '87	Pat McCartan Ex Officio 1 & E
Gerry Doherty '86	Mary McMahon '87 3
Francie Donnelly '86 3 & E	John McManus co-opted 1
Philomena Donnelly '86 3 & E	Padraig Mannion co-opted
Triona Dooney '87	Des O'Hagan '86 2 & E
Tom French '86	Sean Ó Cionnaith '87 3
John Gallagher	Henry Patterson co-opted
Sean Garland '86 3 & E	Pat Rabbitte '86
Des Geraghty '86 3 & E	Fearghal Ross co-opted
Paddy Gillan Co-opted	Seamus Rodgers '87 2 & E
Cathal Goulding '87 2	Joe Sherlock '86 3
Eamonn Gilmore '86 3	Eamonn Smullen '86
Seamus Harrison '87 3	Kevin Smyth '87 3
	Sean Walsh '86 None

Regional Delegates

N.I. Tommy Owens
N.I. Gerry O'Hanlon 1
N.I. Ciaran Bradley 3
C/U Oliver Rogers 3
M Paddy Gallagher
M Bernard Lynch
Kieran Connolly 3 & E
D Pat Brady
C/U Eugene Hickland 3 & E
L Colm Kirwan 1
L John King

The Workers' Party in the Dáil

During the past 12 months the Workers' Party deputies tabled 783 Dáil questions. In the same period four Private Members Bills were tabled — The Local Government (Amendment) Bill, which would prevent the arbitrary abolition of local authorities by the Minister for the Environment; Local Government (Financial Provisions) Bill which provides for the abolition of local water charges; Extradition (European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism)(Amendment Bill) which would have required the establishment of a prima facie case before a person was extradited; and the Ombudsman (Amendment) Bill designed to compel the government to provide adequate staffing for the Ombudsman's Office.

Nine Private Members Motions were tabled on subjects including health cuts, Sellafield, oil companies, the Ombudsman's Office, the abolition of the Health Education Bureau, social welfare cutbacks, and the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Amendments were tabled to a wide range of motions from other parties, and of course to many pieces of government legislation:

This degree of activity has only been possible because of the exceptional level of commitment and dedication shown by our TDs. The two extra seats won in the February 1987 General Election have been of great assistance in enabling the Party to cover a far wider range of matters than was possible with two TDs. The Workers' Party now has three committee seats — the Committee on Procedures and Privileges, the Committee on Secondary Legislation of the EEC and the Special Committee considering the Judicial, Separation and Family Law Reform Bill.

The Party in the Dáil still works under considerable disadvantage compared to the other parties. We are the only party in opposition which does not have at least seven TDs, the minimum number required to qualify for recognition as a group, which in turn qualifies a party for time for private members motions, private members bills and priority questions. Despite the number of private members bills and motions listed above, we never actually got time to discuss any of them. Where possible motions were re-submitted as amendments to other motions before the Dáil. Clearly qualification as a group would enable us to compete on more equal terms with the other opposition parties.

It has to be said that much of the public and indeed many of our own members are unaware of the work done by our TDs in the Dáil. The level of coverage of the Dáil has been reduced in most newspapers, and the benefit of RTE's recording of Dáil proceedings is greatly diminished by the station's policy of broadcasting 'Today in the Dáil' at a time when very few people are listening to the radio. We need to examine ways in which we can make our own members and the general public more aware of what the party has been doing in the Dáil. In this context an expanded *Irish People* would have a particularly important role to play.

It is now almost seven years since a Workers' Party TD was first elected to the Dáil, and nobody can surely be in any doubt as to the part that our presence there has played in building the party. It must also be clear however that TDs in the Dáil will not, on their own, build the party. There must be no question of areas sitting back and hoping to benefit from the energy and activity of our TDs in the Dáil. Only the combined impact of a strong Dáil presence plus concerted effort on the ground in every constituency can win the substantial national support that we must be working towards.

The most significant political development in the Dáil during the past 12 months has been the development of a grand political alliance on the right, which has enabled Fianna Fáil, with the enthusiastic support of Fine Gael and the benign neutrality of the Progressive Democrats, to embark on a programme of cutbacks of unprecedented viciousness in health, education, social welfare and local services. One of the positive spin-offs of the new consensus on the right has been that the class lines in Irish politics are now being drawn more clearly than ever before. Big business, large farmers and the conservative parties have been standing together with their natural allies in Fianna Fáil, while the only real opposition to the Fianna Fáil administration has come from the Workers' party and others on the left. This has been reflected in the Dáil with the Workers' Party and others on the left adopting a similar voting strategy on almost all issues, with our party in many cases giving the lead.

Members of the party will be aware that there have been a series of informal meetings involving the Workers' Party, the Labour Party, the Democratic Socialist Party and a number of individual members of the Oireachtas, who would consider themselves to be on the 'left'. The Workers' Party has always advocated principled cooperation among parties on the left, and had on a number of occasions over the past few years approached the Labour Party about the possibility of cooperation between our parties, without any success. These discussions are continuing, but progress has been slow, and it is probably too early to say if they will lead to any significant developments. Efforts to produce a joint statement on the economy in advance of the budget failed because the Labour Party could not deal with it in time.

Environment and Local Government

European Year of the Environment, International Year of the Homeless and the Dublin Millennium have all occurred since the last Ard Fheis. Yet, the past year has been one of the worst for the environment in Ireland, and one of the busiest for the Environment and Local Government Committee.

The government cut £90 million from Local Government finance, reduced staffing in local authorities and abolished An Foras Forbartha. Due to lack of resources, the Regional Fishery Boards were unable to adequately fight river pollution as dead fish were hauled from the country's rivers. The threat from Britain's outmoded nuclear industry was reinforced with further reports of 'leaks' at Sellafield and 'testing' at Trawsfynydd.

In Northern Ireland, local authorities continued to suffer from sectarian flag-waving, while Thatcher's Government prepares to introduce the dole tax.

Throughout the year, the Committee prepared public statements on these and other issues, as the opportunity presented.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CUTS

The biggest difficulty faced by the Party's councillors related to the Government cuts. At the time of the last Ard Fheis, the new Fianna Fáil Government had just confirmed the previous Coalition Government's cutback in the allocation to local authorities, and Estimates meetings had just commenced. The problem was compounded, in the Autumn, when the Government announced a further massive cut in Council/Corporation Rates support Grants and Estimates meetings were ordered for November/December.

On later occasions, meetings of Party Councillors were convened and a strategy recommended by the Ard Comhairle. Fianna Fáil had promised to introduce legislation to abolish water charges but reneged on this. As a result, local communities were faced with cuts in services and increases in water charges.

The Workers' Party continued its consistent opposition to both water charges and to cuts in services and jobs, despite the threat of Council abolition in some areas, notably, Bray UDC, Dublin County Council and Dun Laoghaire Corporation. Throughout the country, the Party continued to lead campaigns of opposition to the water charges and in some areas individual members of the Party were the object of vindictiveness by local authority managements. The courageous stands taken by Cllr. Michael Enright (Wexford); John King (Meath) and Catherine Murphy (Kildare) deserve special praise.

The effect of the Government's policy on Local Authority funding is that:-

- (a) The PAYE taxpayer is being double taxed by the imposition of water charges.

- (b) Local services are being run down as a prelude to privatisation.
- (c) Huge numbers of jobs are being lost in local authorities; and
- (d) The principle of local democracy is being undermined as elected councils are being rendered ineffective by Government policy.

These problems and the Party's response to them are under continuous examination by the Committee. Following the debate at this year's Ard Fheis, it is hoped to produce a major policy statement on Local Government and Local Democracy.

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Following the decision by the Ard Comhairle to designate *The Environment* as one of the main areas for debate and policy development at this year's Ard Fheis, the Committee concentrated its energies on producing a major draft policy statement on the Environment.

This draft document has already been considered by the Ard Comhairle and has been circulated to branches and is the basis for the Environment Debate at the Ard Fheis.

Following the Ard Fheis, it is hoped to publish the Party's comprehensive policy on The Environment.

PARTICIPATION

Like other Specialist Committees, the Environment and Local Government Committee has been experiencing organisational difficulties. This is due mainly to:-

- (a) The fact that membership is composed of Party members who, in most cases, are already over-burdened with Party work; and
- (b) The responsibilities of this Committee are very wide ranging.

No doubt there are many members of the Party, whose talents and knowledge would be of considerable benefit to this Committee. Branches and Constituency Councils are asked to immediately forward the names of such members to the Chairperson of the Committee.

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee consists of seven members: Oliver Rogers (chair), Gerry Doherty, Joe Dowds, Tommy Holmes, Jimmy Homan, Pdraig Mannion and Jacqui O'Dowd. The full committee met six times during the year. The chair and the financial officers met on another six occasions.

Last year the Party, as ever, walked the financial tightrope. Despite a few close calls, not only did we not fall into the abyss but have actually made it through with a reasonable bank balance. As can be seen from the Party's accounts, the Ard Comhairle engaged in substantial borrowing during the past year. Such borrowings must be seen in the context of a very busy year politically. Following the General Election in the Republic, there was then the referendum on the S.E.A., the general election in Northern Ireland followed by the National Recruitment Campaign towards the end of 1987. All of these campaigns involved certain expenditure which is, in a strict accounting sense non-recoverable. However, the political need of the Party to expand makes it inevitable that such spending will always occur and must be budgeted for. The Party also, over the last year, cleared an accumulated debt to Repsol which had built up over a number of elections since 1984 and which Repsol was no longer willing to sustain. It must also be stated that our ability to borrow from the banks reflects the confidence of that system in our ability to grow and generate sufficient funds to repay them and pay the interest.

The development fund draw was again a major boost to our finances mid-way through the year. After the success of the 300 draw in 1986-87, we aimed to expand to 400 this year. Despite a slow start response, it turned out to be so substantial that we ended up with 500 people wanting to participate. We decided, therefore, to run the 400 draw as advertised and also ran a parallel draw of 100 tickets. This excellent response augers well for its continuation and we should be in a position this year to increase our numbers further and enter the star prize arena, with motor cars etc. The demand appears to be for fewer and bigger prizes. Almost 40% of this year's participants paid cash in advance, which was a major injection of cash into the Party. The generous incentive terms of commission to constituencies has meant that many constituencies have now almost totally cleared their election bills in a relatively painless way.

Members' registration fees, sales of party stamps, and branch affiliation fees are the bread and butter of Party income. In many ways also, it is a barometer of the financial health of the Party locally and a reflection of the urgency with which commitments are viewed. This year a special effort was made to ensure that all members registered and branches affiliated as early as possible in the financial year. At first, this effort seemed to be paying off with a marked improvement in the first 2/3 months. However, that early momentum slackened off dramatically until we were left with a situation which no more than parallels the natural growth of the Party itself. Our

analysis of the data available to us shows that despite marked improvement by some areas, the traditional laggards are still laggards. The Finance Committee are currently finalising proposals that should ensure a more regular flow of income from registrations/affiliations especially in the early Summer months when a number of large bills come together. The proposals, amongst other things, deal with incentives for the bulk buying, and early buying of party stamps.

Our national collection, as has been stated year in, year out at Ard Fheiseanna and other Party conferences, is both a political as well as a money-raising exercise. Let us take but one example of what can be done. Dublin South-West, during its door-to-door collection from mid-August to the end of September raised almost £30,000. At the same time they delivered a further 15,000 leaflets which has been produced through the Dublin Region. This is the interface of finance and politics which should happen everywhere. There are many other success stories especially from some Urban areas. There are, however, other stories to be told — of badly organised, half hearted approaches which end up demoralising our members and supporters. We can no longer afford such slipshod efforts. We must also make the point, regrettably, that in many areas the agreed Minimum Contributions to Head Office from the national collections took a back seat while other debts (see below) were being cleared.

Last year's Ard Fheis followed closely on the general election in the Republic. At that time we referred in passing to the problem presented by the fact that many constituencies had contracted large local debts, including in many cases, bank loans. The extent of this problem, or the difficulties it would pose vis-a-vis payments of bills to Head Office was not fully appreciated at that time. Therefore, every effort has been made through the year to devise and facilitate fund raising at a local level. It is worth re-iterating here what was agreed last year, that local borrowing can only be contracted after consultation and agreement of the national financial officers of the Party.

The budgets and financial operations of the Party's national specialist committees is an area where much work needs to be done. If these committees are active then they will be holding conferences, issuing publications, incurring travel costs etc. These costs are then borne, generally, by the Party centre. We have never yet managed to accurately budget for these costs at the beginning of the financial year. A system should, we feel, be put in place whereby all committees submit draft financial plans to the Finance Committee, who could then incorporate them into the Party budget and life would be simpler all around.

Health & Social Services Report

The main achievement of the Health & Social Services Committee this year was the preparation of *Public Health versus Private Wealth* a pamphlet on 'Health Care: Costs & Priorities' which was published by the Party in June 1987. The pamphlet was a concise, hard-hitting analysis of the changes which have been taking place in the health care system, the fallacious arguments being made in favour of the cuts in the public service, the **expansion** of private care, and the reforms which are really required in the health service to make it efficient and effective for all users.

The publication attracted favourable publicity at the time and members of the Committee accompanied Party TD's as speakers at a number of public meetings on the subject, in different parts of the country. However, as the year wore on, closures and cutbacks in the public hospitals were confirmed, new private facilities and services expanded, and more and more of our predictions became realities; yet somehow it proved increasingly difficult to keep health on the political agenda or to keep up the initial momentum of public meetings, demonstrations against cuts and resistance to privatisation. By the Autumn, much of this momentum had evaporated and public attention had shifted away from health, towards the question of education and the cutbacks there.

Otherwise, the Committee's work during the year was of a routine nature such as analysis of the Budget changes, assistance to the TD's in responding to new legislation and suggesting amendments, and the provision of briefing notes on particular issues (e.g the proposal to extend elements of the social insurance system to the self-employed). A watch was kept on the continuing repercussions of the so-called 'equality changes' of November 1986, including the various court cases arising from the unsatisfactory manner in which the Government had chosen to implement the EEC Directive on Equal Treatment in Social Security.

The main issues which the Committee is currently concerned with are ongoing monitoring of developments in the health services, with a view to highlighting and commenting publicly on both the immediate and long-term implications of privatisation; assessment of all changes in the social welfare system, many of which are being introduced by stealth, with little or no public debate, for the purpose of cost-cutting through denial of benefits; and examinations of the Government's proposals for 'reform' (i.e. **privatisation**), of the disability benefit scheme. While exact details of the latter are not yet available, it would appear that the proposals — which involve payment of disability benefit by employers for the first 13 weeks of any illness, with subsequent refunds by the State to employers — are designed primarily to save on administration expenses and to raise additional tax revenue from PAYE workers (since disability benefit is not taxable but payments from employers are).

There are many dangers for workers in such a change, and the fact that the Thatcher Government introduced similar changes in the UK system in 1983 should also be a cause for caution. Studies of the UK changes have shown that employers as a whole were major beneficiaries, while employees lost out enormously and the State gained nothing (indeed, certain losses were involved). The Committee intends to analyse the issue — among others — in greater depth in the coming months.

Again, the Committee would appeal for Party members with particular interest or expertise in any or all of the large number of important health and Social welfare questions to be addressed, to come forward and contribute to the work which needs to be done. We are acutely aware that only a fraction of it is being handled comprehensively at present.

Cultural Committee

The Cultural Committee has been active in organising events to mark May Day both in Belfast and Dublin. Great credit is due to our Belfast comrades who from small beginnings, have developed the Belfast Workers' Festival into a major cultural event in Northern Ireland. Dublin is embarking on a similar undertaking this year, and it is hoped that other areas will follow the example set by Belfast. May Day is the workers' day throughout the world, and we should make every effort to establish it as a day of celebration for our class. A day when full expression can be given to the optimism which is at the heart of socialism; a day to pause from the struggle and look forward to a socialist future.

The Cultural Committee intends to stage an appropriate event to mark the 75th Anniversary of the 1913 Dublin Lock-Out, one of the major landmarks in Irish working class history.

Work in progress includes a draft Party arts policy which it is intended to distribute throughout the Party in the Autumn. Comment and criticism will be invited from branches with a view to presenting a completed policy document to next year's Ard Fheis/Annual Delegate Conference.

It is also intended to publish the proceedings of the seminar 'Art, Class and Politics' which was organised by the committee in 1985. It is intended that this publication will provide a starting-point for future seminars involving the Party, cultural workers, the arts community, and the working class movement.

National Women's Committee

The Committee was composed of Angela Cassidy (Kildare) Chair, Valerie Desmond (Cork), Triona Dooney (Dublin), Deirdre O'Connell (Dublin), Anne Lucey (Galway), Mary Bunting (N.I.Region), and Elaine Rush (Belfast).

The Committee met on six occasions over the period July to March. The last year saw increased activity in all areas of the Party programme by the NWC. This was the result of two identifiable events:

1. The continued growth in Party membership throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland.
2. The effects of the harsh, right-wing policies pursued North and South by the conservative governments and the right wing pact between the three largest parties in the south.

The growth in Party membership reflected naturally in women members attracted by our socialist policies and within that our commitment to women as part of the working class.

It was therefore seen as important that the Party structures ensure the integration of women as members and allow women develop within the Party to take on the roles as officers and representatives at all levels.

This could best be done by greater contact between the NWC and constituencies with a view to discussing with Party members at local level ways and means to encourage active participation by women.

This worked well in constituencies visited and the two-way flow of information has resulted in new approaches by constituencies on issues of local and national interest.

The contact established resulted in a greater understanding of specific difficulties for women, particularly those with family commitments, in attending Party meetings and carrying out our programme of work.

Issues at local level such as: poorly laid out estates, lack of transport facilities, absence of local health clinics, local shopping facilities — amongst others, highlights the plight of women with poor financial resources.

Thoughtless planning over the past decades has culminated in the social and economic isolation of women on large housing estates with little facilities.

The appeal of our Party's policies on the environment, local authority planning, health services and transport needs, were of great benefit in helping areas prioritise the issues that are of everyday concern to women.

The onslaught of government cutbacks on basic rights of proper health facilities and rights to decent education, together with new qualifying regulations for social welfare entitlements, have seen women's rights further eroded.

The withdrawal of funds for family planning clinics, pre and post natal care, cancer screening and harsh regulations for maternity benefit

entitlements, were identified by our Party as some of the areas where government policies attacked the progress made by women in the past years.

Protests organised by our Party on these issues saw large numbers of women taking to the streets and demonstrates for us the necessity of involving women and of identifying issues that affect women. Our committee co-operated with other specialist committees and regions in producing relevant literature and in advertising the impact of these cut-backs, through press statements, public meetings and other activities.

The NWC issued statements outlining the Party position on current issues such as the Hamilton Ruling, the decrease in funding to the Council for the Status of Women and changes in social welfare legislation and lack of reforms in family law.

The Annual Women's Conference was held in early March and was a tremendous success for all who participated. The conference was attended by large groups of women from Northern Ireland and other major cities and towns around the country, as well as being actively supported by Dublin members and Party supporters.

The seminar was titled Learning from the '80s — Planning for the '90s, and we specifically focused on women's work, paid and unpaid.

The object was to evaluate the effectiveness of the various strategies adopted up to now to progress women's interests in these areas. From this we intend to make headway in setting priorities for the coming years and identifying where new or stronger means are needed to pursue the extension and strengthening of women's rights.

The Northern Ireland Women's Department continued their activities on behalf of the Party in the North. They carried out extensive leafletting campaigns, public meetings and demonstrations on issues such as the failure of the Thatcher government to grant a cost-of-living increase in Child Benefit; and on hospital closures and cutting back of essential services.

Seminars were held to discuss Socialism and Feminism, Women and the Party and Women's Health, and a seminar discussion on Women and Politics is scheduled for June 6th.

The NWC was involved in publishing a Women's View supplement and contributions from Party members included articles on women as low paid workers, local authority planning, violence against women, and the struggle of women in Northern Ireland striving for peace, democracy and class politics with the Workers' Party.

The re-launch of Women's View in magazine format is an important development and we are confident of the financial and promotional support of individuals and branches which will ensure its success and regular publication.

At the end of the year there are still many targets we had set ourselves to be completed. The production of a women's handbook for branches and members, regular contact with women's officers and women's groups, and

Economic Affairs Committee

In the past year the Economic Affairs Committee, in view of the uncertain hold that the government has on power, has put more effort than normal into preparing employment plans on a county or constituency basis. Areas were also supplied with a complete economic information pack — covering industry, the structure of industry, agriculture and the structure of land holding, and the categories of production from the land in each county area. The location of unemployment — local figures, towns and townlands, was also supplied to many areas.

The purpose of the research carried out to secure this information is to supply geographical areas with detailed information so that they can write their own leaflets, local pamphlets, and have material available for speeches and press statements. It also helps local areas to identify and locate class forces on a county basis.

Work of this kind, carried out by Economic Affairs Committee Research, is not a new development but more attention has been given to this work this year because of the political uncertainties that exist when a minority government is in office.

It is important that areas make the best use of the material supplied. It should be used as an information base for local agitations. Local economic plans, when supplied, or worked out with local areas, should be used as a means of building local development associations, groups and lobbies. This sort of activity serves to broaden the base of party support, to attract people towards the party and to win new members.

THE BUDGET

A pre-Budget submission was prepared so that the party could avail of this opportunity — the increased awareness of the working class of the question of taxation — to present a view of taxation completely opposed to the establishment view. This also made information available to local areas if they intended to carry out leafleting or local agitation on the question of taxation.

A new study on the whole question of taxation is available for publication by the party as soon as the party can print it. It is important that the party maintain a high profile on this question — still a matter of widespread indignation and public concern because of its obvious injustice.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

It is beyond doubt that the entire media reflects an establishment view on the question of employment and unemployment. This view, presented in different language and sometimes expressing concern for the difficulties of the working class, remains an establishment view of essential economic matters. The establishment view of our economic problems — whether expressed with "hard faced realism" or with "expressions of concern for

the unemployed" — are all united in saying that "nothing can be done" about present economic problems.

Expressions of social concern and a desire to engage in a higher level of charitable work divides those with more humane feelings from the substantial number of those with hard hearts and a hard-faced attitude to the question of unemployment and emigration. Those with rich life-styles have entered into a conspiracy with the establishment media to make the unemployed feel responsible for the fact they are unemployed. This is the purpose of the constant stream of propaganda in favour of "start your own business".

The Party in its studies of the economy is faced with two new problems:

1. The intense efforts being made by the media to promote the lie that huge numbers are opting to "start their own business". At the same time they are silent about the fact that ever increasing and substantial numbers of workers are solving their personal problems — poverty and lack of opportunity — by emigration.
2. We now live in the economic climate created by the passing of the Single European Act. We must give careful study to working out economic policies in the conditions of this development.

The new post Single European Act economic situation means that the ability to compete in the European market and the world market takes on a new importance. Our home market will become completely open to imports, including agricultural imports, with this result — if we cannot compete and sell on the European market neither will we be able to compete and sell on the home market.

When we opposed the signing of the Single European Act we campaigned on the basis of securing agreement on massive increases in the Regional and Social Funds, without loss of aid to agriculture, in order to enable us to modernise our productive machine before facing the full blast of completely open competition. Events since the signing of the Act have justified our attitude. The establishment which assured us that we had nothing to fear from signing before negotiating the best terms — when we were in the best position to make a good bargain — now have difficulty in securing aid far less favourable than what we were at first promised.

We must now endeavour to modernise our productive machine under conditions of full open competition. The government must know what this means, yet in their speeches and their press statements they continue to propagate the idea that our economic difficulties can be solved by "small enterprise" and "individual efforts". It is obvious that intelligent members of the establishment do not believe this propaganda. It is obvious that the real policy of this government and the chief opposition parties is one of emigration. Emigration is the traditional policy of Fianna Fáil governments.

The Workers' Party in its efforts to prevent the continued destruction of our people, publishes material to expose what is happening. One recent effort in this direction is the publication of a new study of the economy in

the Republic of Ireland — 'The Road to Prosperity'.

'The Road to Prosperity' study needs to be put into the hands of, not only Party members all over the Republic of Ireland, but also into the hands of every opinion-maker in the country.

One political problem that we need to combat is the fact that the working class are heartily sick and tired continually hearing "bad news", being blamed for all our economic misfortunes and lectured on the "fact" that they are themselves responsible for their own poverty.

The 'Road to Prosperity' has been published to put an opinion opposing all that. It was produced to give the working class a voice in the present debate on the economy. In this study the economic and political responsibility for present mass unemployment and poverty and emigration is shown to have its origins in the policies of Fianna Fáil governments. The Coalition government of Fine Gael and Labour did nothing while in office to correct the conditions which were causing the slide into deep depression.

It is important to make details of the responsibility for the present economic crisis generally available but our intention in publishing 'The Road to Prosperity' is to show that there is a road out of the present depression. It is not enough to supply details to how the problem came into being unless the road to recovery is also shown. 'The Road to Prosperity' is intended to be a campaigning weapon in the hand of our Party and of progressive honest elements in the country in the battle against poverty, emigration and unemployment.

NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMY

A similar study of the Northern Ireland Economy has been prepared and will soon be published. Economic life in Northern Ireland has many additional problems because of the strength of sectarianism. It is obvious that the problems of poverty and unemployment in Northern Ireland cannot find a long-term solution except on a class basis.

The new study of the Northern Ireland economy contains material and development plans for the agriculture and food-processing industry in addition to development plans for more traditional and new industries. It seeks to substitute, in real terms, class for religious divide.

In Northern Ireland, as in the Republic of Ireland, Economic Affairs has, when possible, worked with local areas to produce local and job creation plans. The most successful example of joint work of this nature is 'The Newry Plan'.

The local Newry and Mourne establishment produced local propaganda along the lines of such establishment efforts in all places. The local establishment attempted to place responsibility for the high level of local unemployment — 40% of the local male workforce unemployed — on the shoulders of the unemployed.

This establishment plan was analysed in detail and shown to be no more than an establishment pretence at concern about the problem and an endeavour to place the blame for the situation on the shoulders of the victims.

The Workers' Party's local reply analysed the structure of local unemployment and put down a jobs creation plan based on the use of local resources to create jobs and a campaign to introduce serious industry development in the area.

This document is also intended as campaigning material which — as it is of a local nature — will make its commonsense easily understood in local conditions. The Newry Plan — like all our plans — is put together with the intention of generating the widest possible support for our Party.

In the next few months the results of campaigns around local employment plans will start to come in and the experience gained in these campaigns — at local level — should be of great value to our Party in its battle against the evil of poverty and emigration.

THE EXPORT PROBLEM

It is impossible to create full employment on the island of Ireland except by way of a policy of greatly increased exports.

Economic Affairs Committee research has made available to our Party details about the unsatisfactory nature of our exports. Here is the problem:

- (1) We are completely dependant on exports.
- (2) Our exports at present, and the jobs they support, depend in large measure on the activities of overseas based firms.
- (3) Our food exports depend to a very unhealthy degree — almost fifty per cent — on 'sales into intervention'.

When that list is put together in that way it is easy to see the gravity of the present economic crisis. It is obvious that we will not move to a much improved economy by the establishment policy of "encouraging small enterprise".

THE INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND

It is important to note the extent to which the money markets and industrial power in the capitalist world — of which we are a part — is becoming internationalised. This development, although not new, is now so widespread that it will have to be taken seriously into account when we work out new job creation plans.

On a hopeful note it is also important to note that we are a very small place, even in European terms, and to win for our products only a small part of the international market will greatly increase the surplus on which our prosperity depends.

We must, therefore, champion increased efficiency and quality in our production methods and products.

The main lines on which Party economic policy has been based are still valid — efficient State enterprise capable of competing on the international market. We have condemned the establishment practice of throwing money at private enterprise and hoping in this way to generate jobs. We have said that economic planning is needed with jobs creation as its objective.

Work is continuing along these lines.

Publicity and Communications

Four hundred and three items of press material were issued by the National Press Office during the past 12 months. This represents an increase of around 10% on the previous year. The acquisition of a FAX machine, which allows for the transmission of press statements direct to the national newspaper offices was of great assistance and has improved the capacity of the party to respond quickly with press statements to issues as they arise.

There were a number of press conferences on issues such as the launching of the recruitment campaign and the publication of new party documents on health and the economy. Other publicity followed on from issues raised in the Dáil — questions, speeches, amendments to Bills, motions etc.

The statements issued covered almost every political, social, and international issue of significance, and were designed to make the public aware of the position of The Workers' Party on these issues. Many members complain about what they see as a lack of adequate publicity for the party's position on important issues. There is no doubt that the effort put into publicity is not always reflected in terms of column inches or radio and television coverage. However, members should remember that we are still a relatively small party operating in a hostile media environment. Unlike most other European countries, there is no national newspaper (or indeed provincial paper) pursuing a socialist editorial policy. The right wing bias in the newspapers is reflected not just in their reaction to The Workers' Party but in their unambiguous hostility to the trade union movement and to socialism generally.

It is also important to remember that the political scene has become somewhat cluttered with an increasing number of political parties seeking publicity. Just three years ago there were only three 'Parties' in the Dáil — the Fine Gael/Labour Coalition, Fianna Fáil, and The Workers' Party. Now there is Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Progressive Democrats, Labour and The Workers' Party all competing for coverage, but the amount of space devoted by the newspapers to political matters has, if anything, declined.

The difficulties we experience at national level are also a common problem with local newspapers. Notwithstanding these difficulties it is clear that many local areas, at constituency and branch level, are not using the local press to the best advantage possible. The established provincial newspapers and the newer 'free sheets' — these are in most cases widely read and are very often looking for topical material. However, many branches and constituencies fall down in the basics by failing to ensure a constant flow of topical material to local papers. There is no point in trying to blame the media for our own shortcomings. There is no guarantee that any paper will carry a Workers' Party statement, but they certainly won't if it is not issued.

Many constituencies and branches have failed to appoint press officers: many other press officers are inactive. The training of branch and constituency press officers will be a priority for the Publicity and Communications Committee over the next year, and it is hoped to hold a series of training seminars/workshops for press officers over the next few months. Provided that there is no general election, the next electoral targets for the party will be the Euro elections of 1989 and the Local Government elections of 1990. The message has repeatedly been given: the elections are not won and lost in the three weeks of an election campaign. This is particularly true in regard to publicity. The work must be done now to ensure that potential candidates are given the publicity necessary to establish them in the public mind well in advance of an election.

A development which will open up new possibilities is the establishment of legal commercial radio stations. These will be established roughly on a one-per-county basis and, under the legislation now going through the Dáil, they will be obliged to carry a certain minimum level of news and current affairs material. All areas must ensure that they are in a position to take full advantage of the opportunities this will bring. The Committee will be preparing plans for training sessions for potential candidates and others likely to be appearing on local radio, to ensure that they will be in a position to articulate the party's viewpoint on local radio stations.

In Northern Ireland the twelve months since the last Ard Fheis began with a Westminster election in which we could only be pleased with the amount of press coverage achieved. This was particularly true of our television coverage, a sector which has previously proved elusive for the Workers' Party.

Every effort has been made since to maintain that high profile. In television and radio terms that has been achieved mainly through the forceful public presentation of various party campaigns and major statements of policy. On balance, ongoing coverage of the party's views in the Northern Ireland newspapers has been slightly improved. It is still difficult to get an adequate hearing for the anti-sectarian, socialist viewpoint in the midst of bitter tribal clashes, but our voice is heard, and the party's propaganda is making an impact on those in Northern Ireland society who are willing to listen.

PUBLICATIONS

Given the hostile media environment in which we operate, our own publications take on an added importance. The main obstacle to developments in this area is the constant problem of inadequate resources.

The Irish People has done a tremendous job over the years as an organiser, as a fund-raiser, and as a raiser of political consciousness.

Northern Ireland

The Party in Northern Ireland continues to maintain a high degree of activity and an equally high profile in a grave situation.

Since the last Ard Fheis/Party Conference, we contested a general election polling 3.14% of the votes cast in the 14 constituencies in which we had candidates, a total of 19,294 votes. This was in a highly polarised sectarian situation and we note that we increased our vote in virtually every constituency and that in particular we made significant gains in east and south Belfast, in Fermanagh/South Tyrone, and in Strangford.

Comrades at home and abroad should have regard for the fact that all our progress in Northern Ireland has been made at great cost. Last year was no different. Comrade Emmanuel Wilson was murdered by the sectarian terrorists of the Provisionals. We utterly reject the foul claims made by his killers and ask how anyone could possibly be an informant on those responsible for such massacres as Claudy, Kingsmill, La Mon, and Enniskillen, to mention but a few? We offer the Ard Fheis/Party Conference condolences to his wife and family.

The party continues to remain implacably opposed to terrorism and we have taken every opportunity to state our total commitment to the democratic process and the complete elimination of terrorism in statements and press conferences. In particular we have used such periods as Christmas to restate the party's programme of peace, work, democracy and class politics in Northern Ireland. Over 50,000 leaflets on this theme were delivered in every major urban centre just prior to last Xmas.

There has been increasing recognition by the people of Northern Ireland of the party's role in seeking peace and a new, central Northern Ireland government. We take this opportunity to thank the journalists and other media workers who have attended the many party press conferences during the last twelve months and enabled us to bring the politics of class unity and class politics to a deeply divided society.

The party has been extremely active on a number of related fronts: we have opposed the sectarian MacBride Principles, objected to the British government's proposals for fair employment, been to the forefront in defence of the National Health Service, and conducted a province-wide campaign against cuts in child benefits. In addition we made a submission on the Belfast Urban Renewal Plan.

At the same time the Northern Regional Committee of the party has intensified its efforts to build the party in districts where we are as yet unrepresented. Such work is slow but there has been a small but significant number of applications to join the party. More work needs to be done on this front and an ongoing review of party publicity, public meetings, the *Northern People*, etc. has been set in motion.

There is a possibility of elections to a new Northern Ireland Assembly sometime this year or early next. The party in Northern Ireland looks forward confidently to such elections and would hope to contest as many constituencies as possible to give the greatest possible opportunity to the citizens of Northern Ireland to vote for the class politics of peace, work, and democracy.

State Education Committee

Following last year's Ard Fheis recommendation, the State Education Committee was formed as a full Party Committee with Noel Ward as Chairperson. The Committee membership is drawn from both Northern Ireland and the Republic and met on four occasions.

During the year it drafted a number of leaflets for education campaigns in response to government cutbacks. It also organised two seminars on education themes. The first was a public seminar on 'The Future of Education' which had speakers from the TUI, the INTO, and also Professor John Coolahan, a leading authority on Irish education. The second was an internal Party Seminar on 'Socialist Principles in Education'. A number of proposals for future projects arose from this seminar, including the drafting of an Education Bill. It is hoped to get this underway this year.

The Committee also provided briefings on various legislative proposals and Dáil Motions during the year, and also prepared a series of Dáil questions.

Briefings were prepared for branches on the school cuts campaigns, both in relation to the infamous circular 20/87 which cuts the pupil teacher ratio in national schools, and the cuts in all sectors of second level and third level education, including Adult Education and Literacy Schemes.

There is no doubt that the attack on education will be intensified during the coming year. Circular 20/87 has not been withdrawn and further cuts can be expected in the estimates for 1989. It is essential that the Party prepares now for a renewed campaign against this assault on education and that we are ready to move, particularly after the summer holidays, when the effects of larger classes will be obvious, if Fianna Fáil have not been forced to withdraw circular 20/87 by then.

Continued

PARTY EDUCATION

The past year saw an increased demand from party branches for education seminars and lectures, both for new members and by long-standing members wishing to develop their political understanding. A number of day-long seminars were held in different parts of the country and a very successful week-long Summer School was held in Belfast. The Summer School is again being held this year in Belfast and it is expected that many more members will participate. There is a considerable amount of educational material now available arising from the various seminars and it is planned to produce this in booklet form this year as an aid to education officers. It has still not been found possible to publish 'Class Politics' for lack of resources, but the Committee will be making special efforts to produce at least one issue for 1988.

The growth in party membership in the past year due to the recruitment campaign places a particular responsibility on branches to ensure that there is a continuing process of political education and discussion at branch meetings. The Committee is available to assist in every way possible with this process, and will arrange speakers on specialist topics when requested. All branches are urged to nominate a member to participate in this year's Summer School which takes place in Belfast from Friday 19th August to Friday 26th August.

International Committee

The past year was a significant one for Workers' Party activity in the International area, involving a strengthening of our international contacts, assertion of our policy of a positively neutral and non-aligned Ireland and implementation of important solidarity work.

The Workers' Party has stepped up its contacts with other Workers', Socialist and Communist parties in Europe and elsewhere in the past year. At EEC level there have been continuing contacts with the Communist and Allies group in the European Parliament and continued links with other socialist parties on an individual basis.

Our proposal to host a meeting of Left parties within the EEC is still under consideration. It could discuss issues such as international peace, opposition to nuclear weapons, employment creation and opposition to terrorism. Discussions on these subjects are particularly relevant in the context of the approaching elections to the European Parliament, due in June 1989.

On wider international contacts, official meetings were held with the Chinese Communist Party, on the occasion of the first visit by Party representatives to Beijing last year, where a wide range of matters of mutual interest were discussed.

Existing relations were further developed through visits or meetings with the C.P.S.U., Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Communist Party of Cuba, and attendance at the British Labour Party Conference.

Party representatives took part in two tours to the United States, where Workers' Party support groups have been reorganised. A speaking tour was held in a number of cities. Similarly, in Britain visits were made to London and Glasgow with the aim of reorganising the Irish Workers' Organisation/Clan na hEireann.

The issue of threats to Irish neutrality were brought into sharp focus last year. Following the adoption by the Dáil of the Single European Act, the Workers' Party played a major role in opposition to the subsequent referendum to amend the constitution to facilitate implementation of the Act. The Workers' Party sought re-negotiation of the SEA, involving inserting clauses which would guarantee Ireland's essential economic and neutrality interests.

The significant vote against the Referendum, despite overwhelming propaganda from the conservative parties, the EEC itself and much of the Irish media, is a tribute to the hard work of party members and members of various peace, religious and trades union groups during that campaign.

The need to defend and strengthen our neutrality, however, remains vital, given numerous statements both by Irish and EEC politicians since the SEA Referendum calling for a common military policy by the EEC, given that the Single European Act effectively forbids a policy of non-alignment by the EEC.

The recent agreements between the USSR and the US on reduction in intermediate range nuclear missiles is, however, a major breakthrough against militarist policies generally and something which the Workers' Party must work to pressurise the Irish government to follow up on, through positive disarmament proposals at EEC, UN and other international fora.

The struggles against apartheid, zionism and for social progress in many countries throughout the world also moved into sharper focus in the past year.

In Nicaragua, the democratically elected Sandinista government came under increasing and sustained pressure from the US government through its backing of the terrorist, bandit and former Somoza dictatorship elements, which attempt to sabotage the Nicaraguan economy and social structure.

The Workers' Party ran a major solidarity campaign to aid social reconstruction in that country, and earlier this year a consignment of £12,000 worth of medical equipment and supplies was sent to Nicaragua.

The Chairman of the International Committee, Sean Ó Cionnaith, accompanied by Dr Sean Keane, an Orthopaedic surgeon in the United States, delivered the equipment and spent some time in Nicaragua discussing with the relevant authorities the current situation and of how best the Workers' Party can assist in the future.

The Workers' Party also successfully proposed an all Party motion in the Dáil on Central America. It must now be hoped that the initiatives and agreements made by the Nicaraguan government will allow peace to return to Nicaragua and result in an end to all outside interference in Nicaraguan affairs.

In South Africa, the struggle against the apartheid system which denies the vast majority of the people even the most basic rights, moved into a further stage, with continued mass unrest and opposition to the racist Botha government. The Workers' Party has continued its full support for the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front and other non-racial democratic organisations. A number of meetings have been held with the ANC, and initiatives included tabling a Special Notice Question in the Dáil on the threatened execution of the Sharpeville Six.

On Palestine, the Workers' Party has tabled a Private Members' Bill deploring the tactics of the Israeli security forces, seeking the withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied areas, recognising the PLO as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, and seeking an international peace conference on the Middle East at which the PLO should be full participants.

Workers' Party TD, Prionsias De Rossa, attended an international conference on Palestine with Sen. Michael Lanigan through the Ireland Friends of Palestine.

The continued US domination of South Korea, the presence of over 40,000 US troops with thousands of so-called tactical nuclear weapons,

makes the Korean peninsula a major flashpoint in the world. It is vital that all progressive forces continue to support the ongoing struggle of the Korean people for peaceful re-unification along with the struggle for democracy and justice in South Korea.

Our efforts to assist the Korean people in their struggle is on a number of fronts, cultural and political. As with so many areas of our activity, the need to combat the distortion and lies peddled about the Korean struggle is one of the most important. We would hope in future to devote sections of our international newsletter to particular areas of struggle such as that of the Korean people.

Once again, we must draw attention to the senseless and criminal war between Iran and Iraq. It is more evident than ever before that it is the mullahs in Tehran under the Ayatollah Khomeini who are blocking the road to peace. It is they who prolong the death and destruction of the people of Iran and Iraq. We know that within Iran the progressive forces are struggling under the most severe repression. We are confident nevertheless that the long dark night of the Iranian people, under the Shah and now under the Ayatollah must end. We, for our part, will do all that we can to assist them in this struggle.

An example of how local areas can play an important role in solidarity work was shown by the decision of Cork Corporation to write to Irish-born Israeli President, Chaim Herzog, to protest at the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli forces. This was proposed by our Councillors.

In the Dáil our TDs tabled over 50 questions relating to international issues. One of the most interesting was that which revealed that almost 11,000 military aircraft were given permission to fly over Irish airspace last year, both threatening our neutrality and public safety as many would be expected to carry nuclear weapons or be nuclear capable.

Ireland magazine was published twice in the past year and widely circulated. Workers' Party Youth published the first issue of an international newsletter, Young Ireland. The past year saw an expansion of international work by our Youth. Important developments included attendance at the Congress of the SSM in Czechoslovakia, hosting a visit to schools and local areas by a peace expert from the USSR and the first official meeting between our Youth and the ANC Youth, at which a number of initiatives were agreed.

Through all our International work, there has been an emphasis on promoting a democratic and peaceful way forward for Northern Ireland, and explaining the sectarian and fruitless nature of paramilitary, particularly Provisional IRA, violence. Recent events in Northern Ireland emphasise the need to step up this work, and the need, especially among those interested in Irish affairs in Britain and the US, to work for serious political initiatives geared to involving all democratic forces and parties in Northern Ireland.

Electoral & Recruitment Committee

The twelve month period since our last Ard Fheis has been a period of relative 'electoral quiet' with Westminster elections and three Belfast City Council by-elections where we polled well.

However, this period will be short-lived and apart from the certainty of EEC elections and Local Authority Elections in Northern Ireland next year, there is every likelihood of a General Election in the Republic in the short term. Party building and preparation is both urgent and crucial to ensure our continuing electoral progress.

LOCAL ELECTIONS are essentially National Elections in Northern Ireland given that they are the only democratic forum in the Region. The importance for us to contest on a wide basis, spreading our anti-sectarian message 'Workers Unite!' remains our objective. We must win seats however, and to do so a detailed plan of action is required for implementation.

To many in Northern Ireland, successful local government is a prerequisite for Devolved Government and the opposite is the case for those who don't want to see any elected forum in the Region.

To us, therefore, the importance of further success is critical to ensure Local Government works.

EEC ELECTIONS

As these will be the first direct elections since the signing of the Single European Act and the last before the operation of the Single Market, the political importance should be obvious. This is not apparent and we must take the initiative. The importance of winning seats in 1989 will be infinitely more so than before, given the increasing role the European Parliament plays in the affairs of Ireland.

The following preparations will be undertaken in the coming weeks: An internal EEC awareness programme, a fund-raising drive to raise the enormous finance necessary for the contest, the organisation of conventions to select successful candidates, a programme of activity for candidates to promote them and a public awareness of the importance of the EEC elections. Selection conventions will take place in the Autumn.

DÁIL ELECTIONS

A detailed report has been prepared and is in the course of discussion on the performance of our candidates in Dáil elections since 1981. There are obvious gaps caused by a shortfall in work and organisation.

While we will continue to grade constituencies in order of importance, the need to increase our number of TDs is a primary objective. We are the only left wing party in Europe making gains and while gains must be again made in the forthcoming contest, we must also prepare constituencies for

subsequent elections for, as we know, it takes a number of election contests to win a seat.

Demarcation lines, where they exist, must be swept aside. We have many weak constituencies where both candidates and organisers will have to be drafted in to secure a viable Party organisation. This is not by any means a new phenomenon for us but in recent years some constituencies have taken on the air of self sufficient kingdoms.

One candidate or multiple candidate contests will be made wherever it is deemed in the best interests of the Party.

It has been stated many times and now worth repeating that the prerequisite for successful electoral campaigns is a well organised Party. We don't exist for elections but they are a very important element of our activity.

The work required of constituency organisations and candidates remains mundane day-to-day 'graft'. Political campaigns are both national and local. Each constituency should always have a campaign on hand whether it is about local charges, traffic lights, health cuts, school closures, or whatever. An important element and indeed a fundamental one is for the maximum involvement of the community. We have to continually educate the working class on the causes of the ills of Society and the way forward.

We must have a 'face' on the Party and the Party candidate is that face. S/he must make it an objective to visit every house in the constituency. There can be no 'ifs' or 'buts' about this. The electorate will rarely if ever vote for someone they don't know. Getting on TV, radio or the name in the papers is very important but doesn't substitute the personal contact. If some feel the task of calling to every household is an impossible one, let it be known that candidates for right wing parties regularly pursue such a course and one such man called to each house in one of the largest constituencies on two occasions between recent elections. Right wing parties have an ideology and policies to sell as well and do a very good job of it.

Candidates cannot be aloof and if not already part of the community they must now become an integral part of it. The operation of Advice Centres etc are all 'icebreakers' but our candidates must be an everyday, functioning element of the working class community.

Individual plans are being worked out with each constituency as the requirements of each one are unique.

The Party intends to at least double its Dáil holding in the next election and this will require a deeper commitment from each member. Conventions have taken place in some constituencies and further ones will be organised in the coming weeks. We should see the present right wing effort at gerrymandering constituencies as akin to 'moving the deck chairs on the Titanic'.

Local elections in the Republic will take place in 1990, at the earliest. By October we will require a full list of potential candidates and last minute arrangements will not be tolerated. All candidates will be required to meet

membership requirements and have a proven record of community activity. Local government gains are stepping stones to National Parliament so UDC seats must transfer into County Council seats and we must demand to know why not — when this doesn't happen.

RECRUITMENT

Given a decade of almost continuous electoral contests to 1987, the opportunity, because of the shortage in both physical and financial resources, to mount a statewide campaign didn't present itself.

After much discussion with outside agencies the bottom line was to convey to the public at large that we were a National Party in pursuit of members. Three hundred and fifty thousand leaflets were distributed — one hundred and fifty thousand households in unorganised areas received leaflets. A major poster effort was embarked on with CIE, although we were restricted in our budget. Display of posters by ourselves proved difficult due to the anti-litter legislation and we must now seek our own hoardings.

An amount of stickers and back-up material was produced and all of it can be re-used. 'Open days' and 'Meet the Workers' Party' sessions were held in all major population centres and proved particularly worthwhile in Drogheda and Cork.

Door-to-door canvassing for members was very fruitful in the limited number of areas where it was done. Members must now realise that there is a vast number of potential recruits out there and that it is realistic to set targets based on the percentage of first preference votes obtained. It was indeed the first time for many to ask people to join. Where the Party is organised a thorough effort must be made this year to call on doors based on election tallies initially.

The ideal month for a national campaign is September as the summer months tend to disrupt activity and undo work done immediately prior to it. It is intended to engage in a national campaign in September of each year and the precise form of such campaigns will be a matter of more in-depth discussion.

However, we must become a full-time recruiting party and every constituency and region must see it as part of regular activity. We have enough work to do for fifty thousand members and any area which doesn't see the need for members must be rigorously investigated. Every campaign, no matter how small and no matter on what issue, should produce new members and if they don't we have failed. National campaigns, to be effective, must be fully integrated with all committees and areas concentrating on the one period.

The treatment of new members, as has so often been said, is critical for our advancement. They must be nurtured and educated and be fully convinced at the end of their probationary periods of their initial decision to join.

In recent weeks a follow up to the campaign has been undertaken in organised constituencies with constituency-wide tours by TDs. This process will continue over the coming months with the intention of visiting every town and village in the country.

Conclusion

As reported last year, a major review of Head Office and other aspects of organisation was undertaken by the EPC. We must state that whilst we have had the report on Structures and Personnel, we have been unable to carry the main proposals into effect, as yet. Once again it is the area of resources, financial and personnel and the lack of these, that has prevented us from implementing the consultant's report. We continue to seek ways in which we can solve these problems and Head Office would appreciate any positive suggestions.

The EPC are currently examining a number of other proposals relating to Party structures, Organisation, Finance, Administration, Communications. It is hoped to have some of these implemented after the Ard Fheis and those requiring a change in the Party Constitution to have prepared for the 1989 Ard Fheis.

One of the most important and certainly rewarding activities of last year was our first nationwide recruiting campaign. Whilst the costs may appear high, we must recognise that we have to invest a great deal more in resources to this task. New members are the lifeblood of the Party. If we are to succeed then we need and must have many, many more thousands of members. The next year must see us considerably expand our membership and heighten the political awareness of all our members and supporters.

We must through political education and practical activity begin the fight back against the conservative and reactionary forces that control our society. We must place the Workers' Party in the forefront of the struggle for Peace, Work, Democracy and Class politics. We must be engaged with the people in every aspect of their struggle and as part of this we cannot exclude any form of struggle. Again, we must be constantly analysing and assessing the political situation so that we do not become trapped in the past like other organisations. We must bear in mind Lenin's advice when he said: "It is one thing to preserve the traditions of the revolution, to know how to use them for constant propaganda and agitation and for acquainting the masses with the conditions of a direct and aggressive struggle against the old regime, but quite another thing to repeat a slogan divorced from the sum total of the conditions which give rise to it and which ensured its success and to apply it to essentially different conditions."

Comrades, as we approach the bi-centenary of the French Revolution which launched the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity throughout the world, it enables us to measure the progress made by humanity in its struggle for these aims and also provides us with many examples of revolutions, failures and successes. For us in Ireland the most important element missing in our revolutionary struggle until now has been the revolutionary Party. The tasks of today are in many ways much different than those of the French Revolution but all the time throughout every revolution there are essential, critical and fundamental principles which do not change: the unity of the people in the struggle, the necessity to combat at every period sectarian elements who split and destroy this unity. As we well know, the activities of the terrorist organisations, whether they be catholic nationalist or protestant loyalist only serve the interests of the establishment. A hundred years ago one of the greatest of Irish Revolutionaries, Michael Davitt, stated "Principles of reform intelligently and fearlessly propagated are far more destructive to unjust and worn out systems than dynamite bombs which only kill individuals or knock down buildings but do no injury to oppressive institutions".

This statement, as we know, is as true today as when it was first made. The only way to defeat the terrorists and to win our objectives is to build the unity of the working class under the leadership of The Workers' Party.

APRIL 17, 1988
RDS, DUBLIN